

JANUARY 17, 2001.

Re nomination of Gale Norton for Secretary of the United States Department of Interior.

Senator JEFF BINGAMAN,
Energy and Natural Resources Committee,
Washington DC.

Senator FRANK MURKOWSKI,
Energy and Natural Resources Committee,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS: We, the undersigned state Attorneys General, write to provide important information that will help you evaluate Gale Norton's nomination for Secretary of the Interior. These insights are based on our work with Gale during her eight years as Attorney General for the State of Colorado. While Gale provided numerous examples of her leadership and ability as Colorado's Attorney General, there are a few specific instances that truly demonstrate her skill and experience.

First, in the early 1990's, Gale worked with Attorneys General and Governors in an effort to force the United States Department of Energy to comply with federal environmental laws as its facilities around the nation. Gale helped lead the fight to ensure that Energy would be responsive to the states, comply with the law, and refocus on cleaning up Rocky Flats in Colorado and other sites around the nation.

Gale served as the Chair of the Energy and Environment Committee for the National Association of Attorneys General from 1992 to 1994. As Chair of the Committee, Gale worked with Attorneys General from both political parties to achieve results for all states. Gale had the instinctive ability to work for bipartisan solutions and she helped create consensus on a number of sensitive issues.

Finally, Gale's work on the tobacco settlement was significant. Gale was selected by her colleagues to be a member of the settlement negotiating team. Gale's selection was based on the fact that she is very bright, hard working, and has extremely high ethical standards and integrity. She was a valuable member of the team throughout the prolonged and complicated negotiations.

We know that you are receiving extensive comments about Gale's qualifications. We want to provide you with our views, based on our years of experience working with Gale on complex, sensitive issues. We know that Gale will do her best to build coalitions and develop solutions to hard problems in a way that creates broad-based support. It is our hope that this information will be helpful as you consider Gale Norton's nomination for Secretary of the Interior.

Alan G. Lance, Idaho Attorney General; Christine O. Gregoire, Washington Attorney General; Bill Pryor, Alabama Attorney General; Toetagata Albert Mailo, American Samoa Attorney General; Ken Salazar, Colorado Attorney General; Jane Brady, Delaware Attorney General; Jim Ryan, Illinois Attorney General; Steve Carter, Indiana Attorney General; Carla J. Stovall, Kansas Attorney General; Mike Moore, Mississippi Attorney General.

Don Stenberg, Nebraska Attorney General; Frankie Sue Del Papa, Nevada Attorney General; Philip T. McLaughlin, New Hampshire Attorney General; Betty D. Montgomery, Ohio Attorney General; Hardy Myers, Oregon Attorney General; Mike Fisher, Pennsylvania Attorney General; Charlie Condon, South Carolina Attorney General; Mark Barnett, South Dakota Attorney General; John Cornyn, Texas Attorney General; Mark Shurtleff, Utah Attorney General; Mark L.

Earley, Virginia Attorney General; Gay Woodhouse, Wyoming Attorney General.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I thank all of my colleagues who have spoken on behalf of the nominee. The action out of the committee on a vote of 18-2 is certainly, in my opinion, a mandate for approval by this entire body. I think she will represent our new President in a manner that attempts to balance the delicate issue of concern over the environment and the ecology.

Since there has been a lot of comment about ANWR during this entire process and many pictures, for my colleagues, I show a picture of ANWR as it exists for about 9 months of the year. This is what it looks like. Do not be misinformed; it is a long, dark 9-month winter.

I thank the Chair for its indulgence.

It is my understanding that the vote will be scheduled for 2:45 on two nominations and there will be separate votes. I wonder if the Chair could identify those.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will be two separate votes occurring at 2:45. The first will be on the Norton nomination, and the second one will be on the Whitman nomination.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The hour of 12:30 having arrived, the Senate will now stand in recess until the hour of 2:15.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:32 p.m., recessed until 2:17 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CHAFEE).

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF GALE ANN NORTON TO BE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR—Resumed

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I come before you today to offer my views on the nomination of Ms. Gale Norton to be Secretary of the Department of the Interior. I believe in some basic principles relative to Presidential nominees for the President's Cabinet. I believe they are reviewed for purposes of advise and consent of the Senate with the presumption that the President has a right to choose his or her closest advisers.

I believe our duty as Senators in discharging that constitutional responsi-

bility of advise and consent is to assure those advisers are capable of and committed to doing the jobs for which they have been nominated.

In the past, Ms. Norton has made statements that raise questions in my mind, and in many others, about her appropriateness for the position of Secretary of the Interior. Ms. Norton's explanations of those statements suggested that her views have evolved over time.

Having listened to her responses and evaluated her truthfulness, I take her at her word and trust her sincerity. My own life experience tells me that it is possible—in fact, it is highly desirable—for individuals to evolve in their thinking over their adult years. If a person at 55 has the same views they had at 25, that would raise serious questions as to whether this was an individual who was sufficiently affected by life to be an appropriate holder of a position of major public trust.

I asked Ms. Norton a series of questions during the course of the hearings before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. I asked Ms. Norton if she would support the current moratorium that exists on offshore oil and gas leases, particularly those in California and my home State of Florida. She answered yes. She echoed President Bush's support for those moratoriums. I take Ms. Norton at her word.

I asked Ms. Norton if she would work with our State and other States to assure that the wishes of the State, with regard to existing leases, are followed. Ms. Norton answered yes, and I take her at her word.

I asked Ms. Norton if she would enter into discussions toward the objective of developing a plan for the buyback of Outer Continental Shelf leases in those States which had expressed opposition to their development for oil and gas purposes. This is much in line with the plan which is currently in effect in Florida for buyback of leases in the area of the Florida Keys that was originally developed by President George Bush. Ms. Norton answered yes, and I look forward to the opportunity to commence that process.

I spoke to Ms. Norton in my office regarding the importance of the Department of the Interior in the restoration of America's Everglades. I consider the passage of that legislation last year to have been one of the signal events of that Congress and one of the most important environmental advances in recent years.

As a steward of four national park units and 16 national wildlife refuges, the Secretary of the Interior has a distinct role in assuring that the natural systems are protected in America's Everglades, particularly protected as we move forward with their restoration.

She clearly understood the importance of the Department of the Interior's role in Everglades restoration, and I take her at her word.

I asked Ms. Norton what her plans were for funding of the Land and Water